

# UNITY

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# U N I T Y

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## Editorial Comments

**F**OR years we have worked to help Unitarians catch up with the times, stay abreast of them, and where possible take the lead into the future. With the development and growth of regional responsibility and independence, leadership was provided in the area of operational decentralization. This was a real contribution to democratic denominational organization. It resulted in phenomenal increases in membership and individual participation both locally and above the parish level. It demonstrated that democratic processes could work and that there could be effective cooperative coordination between dedicated autonomous Churches, Fellowships, Areas, Regions, and the Continental Association. In doing this, it also provided an effective check on any individual officer or group of officers whose conscious or unconscious lust for power might cause them to feel that they had a divine right to rule. All of this was a creative and constructive expression of the basic Unitarian concept of freedom with responsibility.

We used the past tense in the preceding paragraph because our information seems to indicate that with the merger of the American

Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America into the Unitarian Universalist Association the dynamics of Regionalism is about to be sold down the river. If this should happen it would be a real travesty upon our vaunted democratic freedoms. The merger provided a genuine opportunity to establish some daring, dynamic, democratic processes. Reports have it, however, that our supposedly forward-looking planners are retreating to a centralized monolithic organizational structure which is rapidly becoming antiquated and outmoded even in business and industry.

We predicted the present slowdown in Unitarian Advance. We now make another prediction—that if our present planners destroy the dynamics of democratic Regionalism, the slowdown will continue until it is a slow walk or maybe comes to a complete halt. Twice before in our history there were periods of growth that were reversed by the ascendancy of conservatism.

Our fondest hope is to be proven wrong. But, if this is to come about, there will have to be some fast reshuffling of the cards. At the moment it is a cold deck stacked in favor of the

conservatives.

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A young couple who lived at Abraham Lincoln Centre for a number of years were moving to a home they had purchased. They had not told their small son, aged 3½, about it until the day of the move. When we met them in the lobby to say our "farewell" we asked the son, Tony, where he was going. His reply was, "We have a my house."

Perhaps we can learn something from this youngster about the sense of belonging and participation that is so important for persons volunteering their services for a worth-while cause. Participation takes place on many levels. The highest level of dedication is achieved when the sense of "we" becomes so real and personal that it is also "my." This results from developing the proper relationship between responsibility and authority. One of the mistakes executives sometimes make is assigning responsibility without adequate authority. In business this results in a dissatisfied and frustrated employee. In a voluntary organization it generally means the loss of the loyalty and the participation of the individual concerned. When we ask a person to assume responsibility on a volunteer basis we must not only provide the means for his performing

his function but also the means by which his voice can be heard in the consideration of policy.

In business it may or may not be important whether the employee is unhappy or frustrated. He can "like it or lump it." In a voluntary organization it is quite different. If the volunteer doesn't "like it" the organization has to "lump it."

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A friend of ours recently commented on viewing our rather well-stocked library that unless you looked at, read, or thought about a book at least three times during the year it was not paying its rent. This caused us to look over our shelves and pull out a few books and peruse them. Two of these books we read rather extensively again and revived the delights of their first reading. One was *Cry for Justice*, an anthology of writings of social import edited by Upton Sinclair. The other was *Heavenly Discourse* by John Erskine Scott Wood. This experience reminded us of other books we must dust off and take a look at. *Philosophers in Hades* by T. V. Smith, *Farewell America* by Henry W. Nevin and those we have by John Dewey, Corliss Lamont, A. Eustace Haydon and others. To do this and keep up with our current reading takes a bit of doing but it is worth it.



# The Peril and Promise of the Liberal Religious Outlook on World Affairs

INIS L. CLAUDE, JR.

**D**ICHOTOMY is a very fashionable word just now, and dichotomizing is the favorite indoor sport of the academic tribe to which I belong. We have succeeded in dividing people who think and/or articulate about world affairs into two groups: the realists and the idealists (or Utopians). Having achieved this happy bipolarization, we have set in motion what is called a Great Debate. At issue in this controversy are such fundamental matters as the nature of international relations and the necessary and proper behavior of states in the context of the situation and the system within which they live and move and have their being. I have followed this debate with great interest, and have on occasion become somewhat involved in it. I must say something about this debate before I can get to the subject of "The Peril and Promise of the Liberal Religious Outlook on World Affairs."

I must confess at the outset that the Great Debate is of unsatisfactory quality in many respects. For one thing, it is a very one-sided contest; the realists have it all over the idealists. They have the

big guns, and they fire very well. The idealistic response is often quite pitiful, and it seldom achieves the level of intellectual impressiveness required to do effective battle against the realists. Indeed, the virtual silence which emanates from the position at which the realists direct their fire sometimes tempts me to believe that there are not any idealists there—that the realists are shooting at straw men, presumably stuffed and propped into position by themselves. Perhaps the idealists are not so much incapable as nonexistent. Replies are made to the realists, but conceivably they come from a third quarter, displeasing as that may be to a dichotomizer. In any event, the realists believe that the idealist camp is inhabited, but they do have trouble in finding adequate antagonists, having to resort frequently to grappling with, if not straw men, at least *dead* men—Woodrow Wilson, for instance—or *anonymous* men—"The American Public," for instance—or an occasional politician who is neither hooded nor gowned and who, being thus out of uniform, is doubtfully eligible for this sort of aca-

demic battle.

It should be noted that the realists are *self-designated* realists, and that they have acquired a certain artificial advantage by this semantic maneuver. They have *adopted* the name, but whether they have *earned* it is another matter. One of the confusing things about the debate is the necessity of keeping this question clearly in mind: which position is more realistic—that of the realists or that of those who are not realists?

Other things are confusing as well. Neither group seems to be able to make its position clear to the other. I strongly suspect that this failure of communication stems from a lack of clarity in the positions themselves. I have often felt that neither the realist nor the idealist understands the other, that neither understands himself—and that I understand neither of them. Having confessed my blindness, let me tell you what I see.

The debate may fairly be regarded as a battle over *words*. I do not mean this to suggest that it is meaningless or inconsequential. It is a battle over words, taken as symbols indicative of basic attitudes and viewpoints. The typical realist, for instance, is sharply critical of Woodrow Wilson, not because of what Wilson *did* in the realm of foreign policy, but because of what Wilson *said* about what he did in this

realm; Wilson's *words* convict him of holding attitudes toward, and of cultivating, viewpoints regarding international relations which the realist finds unacceptable and deplorable. Realists disagree as to whether Wilson did the right things for the wrong reasons, or the right things for the right reasons but with the wrong explanations. In either case, they are unhappy about the Wilsonian vocabulary of international relations.

It comes to something like this: the realist goes for words like *power*, *struggle*, *conflict*, and *national interest*; he is very dubious about terms such as *morality*, *harmony*, *cooperation*, and *internationalism*, in international relations discourse. And the idealist—at least the idealist as the realist pictures him—reverses these attitudes and reactions. There is a kind of terminological litmus test involved here. The idealist presumably betrays himself by turning a bit pale with fright when he encounters the *hard* words in the first list; the realist handles them with aplomb. The realist presumably identifies himself by developing a slight flush of contempt when he comes across the *soft* words of the second list; the idealist, on the other hand, seems most comfortable with words of that ilk.

More seriously, the realist position is broadly characterized by



an insistence upon a set of propositions such as these: *power* is the central factor in international politics; states do and must seek primarily to promote their own national interests; this makes of international relations a persistent struggle—a struggle *for* power as an end, and a struggle *with* power as a means, since the national interest of a state cannot be defined without reference to power and cannot be promoted or maintained without recourse, actual or threatened, to power. In a multi-state setting, the relations of states are essentially conflictual, and power is the ultimately decisive factor in those relations. This is a rather grim situation, and states can not—or do not—or should not—permit notions of morality to deflect them from the pursuit of their own interest in this situation.

The realist likes to define the idealist's position for himself, and when he does he usually sets up an easy target. The idealist seems to be a fellow who is unconscious of anything but sweetness and light. He thinks that a natural harmony prevails in the world of states, that states are much more inclined to cooperate for the common good than to compete for selfish advantage, that states are animated by the highest moral purposes, and that power is dirty but, happily, not very important in international relations. Or the

idealist imagines that such a happy situation is well on the way toward becoming an accomplished fact.

An idealist of the sort described here can be readily disembowelled by a thrust of the realist's rapier—but I suggest that such an attack produces a scattering of straw, not a puddle of blood.

It seems to me that the antagonists of the realists are in fact people who believe that the conflictual aspects of international relations can, conceivably, be reduced to manageable proportions, and that it is necessary and proper to make strenuous effort to achieve that reduction. They believe that there are potentialities of cooperation and harmonization in international relations which have not been, but must be, fully exploited. They see the application of moral principles to the interrelationship of states neither as an inherent impossibility, nor as a satisfactorily accomplished fact, nor as a dangerous absurdity, but as a problem which demands careful attention and constructive effort. In short, I would characterize them as reformers—people who deny that international relations are inherently incapable of being anything other than power struggles among purely self-interested political units, and who believe in the desirability of striving to achieve whatever degree of reform they can.

Essentially, what I have done is to suggest that the realist has a strong tendency to caricature the idealist, to misconstrue his position, to make him appear a fuzzy-minded fool. To some degree, the reverse also occurs: critics of the realists portray them unflatteringly as Machiavellians, advocates of a stern amorality which is hardly distinguishable from deplorable immorality. Since the realists have the initiative in this debate, however, I think that the danger of being misrepresented is much less serious for them.

This brings me to the subject of the *peril* of the liberal religious outlook on world affairs. The danger is that the religious liberal may be, or—what is almost as bad—may *appear* to be, guilty of some of the excesses of unrealism which the realist identifies with the idealistic position. The problem is not that an occasional religious liberal, independent of his religious liberalism, may show himself a silly fool; no one would contend that all members of our clan are persons of good sense and sound judgment. It is that religious liberalism *as such* may in some respects conduce to the sort of idealism which realists find so obnoxious and so vulnerable to attack. What are the dangers?

Religious liberalism has little truck with the doctrine of original sin; few of us are conscious

of bruises left by Adam's fall. This, being translated, means that the liberal religious tradition is essentially optimistic about man; it has no deeply ingrained sense of the ineradicable defectiveness, the intrinsic limitation, of man. It is worth noting that the realist school is heavily loaded with Protestant neoorthodox types. One of the most perceptive of the realists, Kenneth W. Thompson, is quite explicit in identifying the realist viewpoint with the *Pauline* doctrine of man, which stresses the acknowledgment of man's inability to transcend his sinful nature. Thompson says in effect that the anti-Pauline viewpoint has dangerous implications for foreign policy and international relations.

This gives us religious liberals, anti-Pauline as we are, something to think about, and perhaps to worry about. This is not to say that we are obligated to shudder whenever we may be told that Unitarianism is a dangerous heresy, but we will do well to allow criticisms of this sort to provoke us to self-criticism, rather than merely to self-defense.

The issue, as I see it, is whether we allow our basic optimism about human capacity to devise and achieve a good society to lead us to unrealistic expectations and perfectionist demands which represent a soaring above the critical problems of our time rather than



a coming to grips with them, on the mundane level where they exist. I think there is profound wisdom in the recognition of the limits of man's capacity at any given time to transcend the human situation in which he has come to be enveloped, and in the awareness that fundamental transformations of that situation are not likely to be accomplished by spasms of resolve or surges of rational creativity. I think we must assume that most of our problems are at best manageable, not soluble in a definitive sense—and we must expect to encounter the phenomenon of the irrepressible *bulge*: poke one problem in successfully and another bulges out somewhere else. We must be as intolerant of perfectionism as of imperfection.

I suspect that this is part of what the realist is trying to say, and I think that he is right. Moreover, I suggest that there is legitimate doubt as to whether the liberal view of man and society tends to provide its adherents with an inclination toward such modesty of expectations, such a tempered view of short-term possibilities, such a philosophic acceptance of the limits of calculated transformation of the human situation, as I have described. I do not mean to argue that the religious liberal is doomed to hold a fatuously optimistic position. I

*do* mean to suggest that there is a danger here which should stimulate our wariness. Somehow, we must contrive to balance our confidence in man with a humility about man; to discipline our expectations; to avoid the pitfall of an excessively sanguine estimate of the possibilities open to us in the here and now for escaping the global predicament.

Our critics are likely to suggest, with some contempt, that religious liberals tend to be “do-gooders”—that *this* is a peril of our position. This presents a rather puzzling problem. I have long thought it paradoxical that *doing good* is so acceptable in the American value system, while being a “do-gooder” is so unacceptable. What is the meaning of this paradox? I am not aware of any accepted definition of the unacceptable do-gooder, but I suspect that the term implies a person who confuses a vague humanitarian generosity or charitableness with a policy designed to deal in more fundamental terms with existent problems. It may suggest a generalized altruism which obscures awareness of the issue of how to maintain *our* interests in a situation of struggle and conflict. It may suggest a turning of eyes away from the unpleasant facts of international conflict and a compensatory concentration on the beautiful ideal of constructive cooperation.

Perhaps the do-gooder is a man who fixes his gaze on the comforting picture of UNICEF because he cannot bear to look at the unedifying picture of the Security Council. Perhaps the do-gooder is the man who persists in describing the United Nations simply as a mechanism for international cooperation — ignoring the fact that it was meant to be, and clearly is, an arena for international conflict as well as a workshop for collaborative international enterprise.

There is clearly peril in the outlook which conceives humanitarian endeavor as a substitute for coming to grips with the tough problems of international political discord. There is a certain selfishness in the relegation to others of the necessary dirty work, the morally uninspiring work, of international politics while one enjoys the superior moral satisfaction of ministering to the poor and halt and lame. There is a certain irresponsibility in taking refuge in acts of international compassion, evading the problem of what to do about, and on behalf of, the national interest. I am not impressed by the realists' moral glorification of the national interest, nor can I see this narrow concept as the foundation for a future world fit for human habitation. But I feel strongly that the morally responsible course

is *not* to brush aside the national interest; it is rather to participate in the redefinition of the national interest, to share in giving it a meaning compatible with and conducive to a viable world order, to join in the consideration of what we can do and what we must do to promote an intelligently conceived and morally disciplined version of the national interest. A good society will be produced, if at all, by the linkage of universal moral concern with national perceptions of self-interest—not by assertions of humanitarian devotion divorced from consideration of national interest.

Again, I do not suggest that do-goodism in the pejorative sense is inherently identifiable with religious liberalism. I do suggest, however, that our tradition may present us with particularly strong temptations in this regard, and that we ought to be on the alert to this peril.

Let me turn now to the *promise* of the liberal religious outlook on world affairs. I do not propose to argue that we are peculiarly fitted to be sound and sensible in this realm—nor do I think that we can rely on the philosophy which underlies our religious position to supply our deficiencies of judgment or understanding; the production of wisdom is still a do-it-yourself proposition. But I think there are resources in reli-



gious liberalism which are significantly usable by those of us who are willing to work at developing a valid approach to world affairs. If religious liberalism sometimes leads us into temptation, it may also have some value in delivering us from evil.

We have noted the *hard-soft* dichotomy which figures in the realist-idealist debate. The realist is a self-consciously *hard* man, a member of what might be designated the "tough guy" school of international political thought. The idealist is undeniably softer. The realist values his reputation for hard-headedness; the idealist treasures the virtue of soft-heartedness. The idealist is anxious to prove that his heart is in the right place; the realist wants to demonstrate that his head is screwed on right. I suspect that both these values are worth striving for—and I think that we are entitled to note that the liberal religious tradition gives prominence to both of them. If I understand our tradition correctly, it stresses the possibility and the necessity of bringing together, into creative interaction, the life of the mind and the life of the spirit; moral impulse and rational capacity are the basic human attributes which liberal religion values and seeks to stimulate. If the religious liberal has a concept of salvation, either for the individual or for

the collectivity, it is expressed in the hope that men can by taking thought define and refine their moral objectives and devise means for accomplishing their moral purposes. If our task is to confront the world situation, with its dangers and its opportunities, equipped with a capability for both moral compassion and rational calculation, I believe that our liberal religious heritage provides us with an unexcelled background. It may be that our liberal churches can make no greater contribution to American society today than to provide a demonstration of the synthesis of deep moral concern—and high moral aspiration—with clear rational process. Our nation can hardly afford to maintain a gulf between goodness and truth; perhaps we can contribute to the formulation of the creative combination of those values. Not all the men of good will nor all the men of good sense will find their religious homes in liberal churches; but our heritage may give valuable support to many of those who are trying hard to be *both* men of good will and men of good sense.

I should like to return to the plight of the realist, trying to make himself clearly understood on the subject of morality and foreign policy. As I have intimated, I think his primary difficulty is that he has not made his

position clear to himself; he vacillates between the repudiation of moral standards for state behavior and the repudiation of the allegation of that repudiation. All the while, he is really expressing his concern about the real and alleged abuse of moralism, the misapplication of morality in world affairs. He is warning against moral fanaticism—the “hard” idealism which overrides all inhibitions in the drive for achievement of an absolutist moral purpose. He is warning against moral self-paralysis—the “soft” idealism which is so restrained by moral scruples that it cannot act effectively in the real world of international politics. I might stress the point that there is a fundamental difference between moral *purpose*—which may be so passionately held that it cancels all restrictions as to means—and moral *restraint*—which may be so strictly adhered to that it inhibits realistic achievement of ends; you may have moralism in both cases, but at one extreme it leads to Holy War and at the other to pacifism. The realist is warning of self-righteousness—the moral smugness which inhibits mutual understanding among conflicting governments and creates rigidity in negotiations that defeats all prospects of reasonable accommodation. He is warning of moral over-simplification—the sophomoric kibitzing

which ignores the complexity and ambiguity of real-life situations, fails to see that a choice between conflicting moral values may have to be made in a given case, and innocently prescribes a clear and simple moral solution to a complicated problem with diverse moral implications.

In all of this, the realist has my deep sympathy. He has pointed to problems that are of fundamental importance. If I reject the pretentiousness of his claim to have found answers, I do so in awareness of the difficulty of finding adequate answers. The resources of the realist position do not seem to me to provide much help. I suggest, with all tentativeness, that the resources of the liberal religious position may offer as rich a gold mine as any for dealing with this set of problems. Liberal religion is associated with a sophisticated approach to the problems of morality. Fanaticism is surely not in our moral tradition. The humility, the tolerance, the sense of relativity, the urge to self-criticism, the appreciation of diverse moral traditions which go along with the religious eclecticism of our movement may stand us in good stead.

Again, I point not to glorious achievement but to challenging possibility. I confess that I have not drawn from the liberal religious tradition a satisfactory



method of coping with the perplexities of the moral problem in the field of foreign policy and international relations. What I should like to suggest, in conclusion, is that the liberal church of our day has a unique opportunity, and a powerful obligation, to draw upon its resources of past and present and make its distinctive contribution to a disciplined understanding of the possible and desirable application of moral principle on the level of global human relations. Surely, we can—and *must*—do better than merely declaring international relations off limits to morality. Surely, we

can—and *must*—do better than declaring that good men will know how to behave in international relations. We have arrived at a situation which makes moral sophistication a matter of life and death for human civilization. We should welcome whatever insight Pauline or other brands of thought may contribute; we should equally explore the promise of liberal religion for the insights that men shall require if they are to succeed in the decisive task which history has assigned to our generation: that of managing the present so that there shall be a future.



## Man Makes His Future!

VICTOR JAMES

**N**OW that the annual festival of miraculous births, singing choirs of angels, shepherds watching their flocks on a cold night with snow on the ground, and all on the birthday of Mithras, the Sun God—now that this festival is at an end once more, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the fact that

Christmas is a man-made event with all the marks of human design upon it, clear for all to see.

Like other man-made festivals, Christmas shows the marks of human fashioning, reveals the growing pains of man's evolving ideas and his tendency to fill in the gaps of his very natural uncertainty with miracle and sign.

It is good, therefore, not to remain in the realm of fantasy too long and to be able to recognize fantasy for what it is. To be fond of fairy stories and legend is a different thing from permitting them to be used as guides to living. It is necessary to live according to facts and evidence, and, whenever legends are allowed to masquerade as facts, we should make clear our disagreement and opposition to this practice.

To be able to sing about shepherds watching their flocks by night and seeing a star in the East, or about a baby born in a manger, is quite legitimate if we think of these stories in their right context, but to argue from this that these stories are descriptions of real happenings and that they are all part of the plans of some great designer that man might be delivered from his original sin, is to make legend into fact, which it is not.

So, Christmas being over for another year, let us return to the world of facts, mundane and otherwise, and realize that man makes his own world as he makes his Christmases and other festivals. With the end of 1960 we face the New Year of 1961 and, as we do so, one of the first essentials towards making 1961 a truly happy New Year is the recognition that 1961 will be just what we make it together, no more and

no less.

It is a good thing to wish others a Happy New Year. It becomes a much better thing if, as we extend those wishes to others, we determine to do our utmost towards making 1961 approximate to our wishes.

Our hopes for the future are not, or should not be, just a loose kind of wishful thinking. Hope, to be real, must have its foundation in the legitimacy of hoping. We do not hope, for example, that one day the moon will be discovered to consist of green cheese, because to hope such a thing is to hope for the impossible. And there are quite a few hopes that fall into this category. There are quite a few people content to be Mr. Micawbers, waiting for and hoping for something to turn up which, by its very nature, can never do so.

What we wish to happen in the New Year, therefore, must be made out of the stuff of reality. Whatever limitations will be placed upon the nature of our hoping for 1961, to a large extent, will be the limitations of our own making. There is, however, much more we can do if we will only try to do it with all that we are and have. If, for example, the people really hoped for peace in 1961, peace would be achieved, and it would be achieved because real hoping means a determina-



tion to make hopes come true.

But what is involved in this necessity, this willingness to face up to and make our future?

There is the knowledge that men have derived from their experiences and their thinking clearly and honestly upon the nature and value of those experiences and that thought, to the effect that there are rich rewards to be reaped from the painstaking testing of hypotheses through patient experimentation. For example, before malaria was conquered as a potent killer, men had to do something far more realistic and akin to factual evidence than sacrifice to the gods or make wild guesses about the night vapors arising from stagnant pools. Careful observation was essential. It was found necessary to collate the results of these observations, some of them completely unproductive of satisfactory results. Patients were watched. Conditions were controlled and finally it seemed as though the area for examination had been narrowed down to the transmitting of the disease by some form of carrier. The hypothesis was formed that some kind of insect was carrying the disease from patient to patient. Volunteers were found, willing to test this theory until, at long last, the culprit was found in the shape of a particular mosquito, the female of the species, anopheles. Its breed-

ing place was found and the larvae were killed by suffocation, by the spraying of the surface of stagnant pools with kerosene.

This is only a very sketchy suggestion of what really happened. The complete story is a saga of careful and often disappointing experimentation spread over a long period of time, but it was this scientific method which achieved the results that prayer, revelation, hit-or-miss guesswork could never have achieved.

This is the method which, through its often self-sacrificing application by dedicated men and women, has been so rich in its rewards. It is the method by which man has won, and will continue to win, more and more exact knowledge about the kind of universe in which he is living. It is this method that has enabled man to bend the natural forces of nature to his own uses. Where the effect of the operation of these natural forces has been evil, he has been able in many cases to control them and mitigate their effect. Much remains to be done by this comparative newcomer on this planet but, if he so desires, man can make the future even more wonderful than the past, more wonderful than he is at present able to imagine.

But, let us never forget that at the back of this reliance on the scientific method, this process of

step-by-step advance, there lies an important assumption.

It is the assumption by man that he possesses an instrument to use, upon which he can rely, the instrument of reason. He believes that if he can think clearly, if he will not permit feeling to warp his judgments, using it as the origin of his sense of the unfitness of things and later as a driving force behind his reasoned convictions, then he has every opportunity of making further advances.

Man also believes that his judgments, based on reason and supported in experience, and tested in the actual business of living, can be relied upon.

Each of us starts with this basic assumption. We do so even though we may be quite unconscious of doing so. Even the dyed-in-the-wool fundamentalist in religion believes his judgment to be reliable, for he declares: "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded." The Roman Catholic declares that his is the one true church and his clergy busy themselves proving it to their satisfaction in pamphlets and discourses. *All* make the assumption that their judgments are reliable and all do this by their reliance on the same instrument, human reason.

Differences arise when other elements are permitted to enter into and color the processes of thought. Traditional beliefs bound up with

fear of the consequences of not believing; the desire to conform and be one of the approving crowd; the natural longing for certainty and comfort; the desire to escape from present suffering, or even a psychologically conditioned response to anything appealing primarily to the emotions—all these and other factors play their parts in the way people think.

There is a marked difference, however, in real thinking, the thinking that is the conscious and deliberate use of reason in the service of the method of science and the thinking that is a form of adjustment to ideas and beliefs already accepted as true for any of the above-mentioned causes.

If, then, we are to solve any problem correctly and satisfactorily according to the method of science, we will not rely on religious revelation or upon any external authority or even upon that handy reference, intuition, regarded by some as being superior to the method of reason. Without the clear recognition and honest acceptance of this basic assumption we cannot talk fruitfully about man making his own future, for the method of reason is the very essence and groundwork of that attitude.

As one very important result of this assumption, we learn that there are no human acts which are



good or bad in themselves. We know an act to be good or bad, not because it has to be judged in relation to some alleged fixed standard of values set up somewhere in the universe, some perfect good or ideal good at which we ought to aim. As Corliss Lamont put it in his book, *Humanism As a Philosophy*, "for Humanism no human acts are good or bad in or of themselves. Whether an act is good or bad is to be judged by its consequences for the individual and society."

We know, too, that many things which were regarded as good yesterday are evil today. And many things regarded as good today may well be evil tomorrow. Once upon a time it was good to burn a woman thought to be a witch, and scriptural authority was quoted to support the correctness of such a punishment. Once upon a time it was thought good to own slaves and use them as a form of expendable and easily replaceable labor. Some of the noblest Greek and Roman philosophers accepted as normal and right the owning of slaves; and, let it be realized, it was not the coming of Christianity which ended such a practice, for Christianity came to the slave and the oppressed as the promise of release from their sufferings, the promise of compensation in the hereafter.

It was only when men were in-

fluenced by changes in their environment and their methods of living conditioned by those changes that slavery was outmoded. It is no chance that slavery was abolished during the rise of the Industrial Revolution, although many contend, and with much truth, that it was only the form of slavery which came to an end.

So to each generation or age there comes the necessity and the duty of working out afresh, if needs be, what is good and bad, and what guiding principles we have at any time to shape our conduct have been worked out and will be worked out as the result of the experiences of individuals living in this world. There is a continual process of adjustment and readjustment going on whereby we correct the bad and try to embody in our laws and regulations the good. Man's idea of the good is generally much in advance of his legislation to establish it.

It is in this process of adjustment and readjustment that we have the field in which enlightened people strive to bring into some active form, some practical adaptation of the good they have seen. It is here in this field that the conservative and the progressive wage their continuous battle, the one for the preservation of the old, the familiar, and the pleasant, and the other for the imple-

mentation of the new and more promising.

Christianity has long been the partner of the conservative in society. As Lamont so truly says, "... deeply embedded in the Christian tradition was an antagonism to the intellect expressed originally in the myth that God punished Adam for disobeying the divine prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. And supernatural religions in general have been very distrustful of human reliance on reason."

As a Humanist, Lamont goes on to point out:

The Humanist submits every ethical precept of the past to the searching analysis of reason, forcing it to justify itself in the light of present circumstances. For Humanism well realizes that all ethical laws and systems are relative to that particular historical period and to the particular culture of which they are a part. What was good for the Old Testament Hebrews some 4,000 years ago, or for the Greeks in 400 B.C., or for Europeans only 100 years ago, is not necessarily good for [people] living in the sixth decade of the twentieth century. Furthermore, in the world today, there are a considerable number of different nations and peoples, some of them in quite dissimilar stages of historical development.

Our reaction to this realization of these "dissimilar stages of historical development" should be that even the dimmest politician among us ought to exercise a little more tolerance and a little less arrogance than is often demonstrated by some of our die-hard, superior bearers of "the white man's burden."

As I see it, the ability of man to make his own future depends on his realization that reason used according to the method of science—that is the painstaking sifting of truth—and the realization that whatever is found to be good, should be applied to living and testing in the task of living.

But what I want to point out at this juncture is the fact that in the course of our seeking the good, in the course of our application of what we have discovered to be good, something else was taking place. Character was being formed. No man can experience the tensions of life, pit himself against life's obstacles and struggle for what he knows to be good without developing his ability to cope with them.

As we continue to live and strive to live better, so we grow ourselves. Let me try to give you a personal example of what I mean. Since the first World War there has been growing in my own mind, largely perhaps as the result of the terrible experiences in



France, the conviction that the time has come for human society to renounce war completely as a method of seeking to attain national ends. The conviction began to grow out of a sense of shock experienced when I saw boys, with whom I had made friends in adverse circumstances, lying mutilated and dead. At one moment I had been laughing and joking with them. Next minute they were dead.

To all those who have experienced this same sense of shock, the sense of utter futility that followed it, who have pondered seriously upon the evil of suddenly ending the wonderful organism of the human body with its ability to think and enjoy life, they too will understand how such an experience can lead to some profound questionings, the answers to which can change the whole course of a life.

It is out of our experiences that we are forced to either build a saner attitude to life or seek to escape from it. We are forced to erect some satisfactory scale of values. In time the first shock of feeling grows into a workable philosophy of life. We rebel against the unnecessary, the cruel, the unjust, and the evil. We say it is better, it is essential, or it is vital that this or that course be adopted and, if we are moved sufficiently and logical in our de-

velopment, we can move to forms of agitation to alter laws, regulate conditions, or remold society.

It is just as we feel strongly and think out honestly and clearly the alternatives to what we abhor that we form character. In the attempt to work out our ideas in practice we make mistakes. We experience opposition, often from those who have never had experiences similar to ours and to whom it is difficult and often impossible to convey the intensity of our convictions.

It is just in this opposition that we form character and it is in the measure of our success in the face of the opposition that we become stronger. We cultivate qualities without knowing they are being cultivated, and we become better able to meet the oppositions we continue to invite as we strive for what is good.

Inevitably, one of the qualities we develop is courage. Unless we develop it we give up the struggle and seek ways of escape. We find ourselves standing for the things we believe to be true even when the price we have to pay may mean the loss of friendship or relegation to the status of dreamer, crank, or extremist.

We develop a sense of purpose in our living and we may find ourselves becoming more lonely, or, at any rate, we change the kind of people from those we

once knew to those from whom we now get understanding and encouragement.

We learn, too, that boldness in the uncompromising declaration of one's beliefs and attitudes discovers the nature of much opposition to be less significant than we once supposed it to be.

But more important and more significant than the growth of courage and boldness, we find that the habit of truth-seeking makes us more concerned about the truthfulness of many ideas and actions we once considered to be the acme of thought and conduct.

Devotion to truth, that is, the deliberate and conscious pursuit of what is good and its transference into right living, engenders a growing regard for it, until it can become the central, motivating force in our lives, in comparison with which nothing else really matters. It is then we really understand the meaning of the phrase: The Love of Truth.

Corliss Lamont has put it:

Allegiance to the social good serves as a beacon that illuminates to some degree most of life's problems. Such an allegiance widens an individual's interests and carries him beyond himself, leading him to subordinate or even forget petty personal desires and troubles in the cause for which he is fighting.

It releases untapped energies

and enables a man to feel success in the accomplishments of others as well as his own. . . .

"This is the true joy of life," said George Bernard Shaw, "the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

In the process of this development a man comes to realize the truth and the deep significance of the fact that he and he alone as man makes his own future.

He ceases to rely on prayer; on the alleged truths of revelation, or the authority of church, book, or priest.

He knows that whatever he and his fellow man achieve, they achieve as the direct result of their own efforts, and the more dedicated those efforts the greater chance there is of real progress. Nothing less than dedication based on the results of clear thinking will do. Backed by a sense of purpose, by the courage and boldness conviction creates, man can do much to make his own future. I offer this as an antidote to the spate of wishful thinking, legendary flapdoodle, and pietistic senti-



mentalism that masquerade at this time of the year as thinking.

There are those who declare in solemn tones that the humanist attitude toward life is arid, cold, and lifeless. Those who speak in this way are afraid to leave the precincts of their comfortable, inherited beliefs, those who seek ways of escape from the heavy burden of life's uncertainties and man's clear duty in the face of them.

Many have believed that man's greatest freedom and his greatest sense of purpose have grown out of his belief in himself and his fellow man, and that a better future is in their united power to create. Corliss Lamont, in his book, *Humanism As a Philosophy*, refers to Shelley's great poem, "Prometheus Unbound." He says:

The symbolic meaning of this poem is that the [man-made] God of theology is a brain-spun creation of the human imagination and that man remains in thrall to this nonexistent being until he takes his destiny

into his own hands, winning salvation by bringing about an earthly millenium in place of the Christian heaven. In the closing stanza of "Prometheus Unbound," Shelley, in a final summing up of the spirit of Prometheus himself, wrote one of the most moving passages of militant Humanism in all poetry.

I will leave you with this stanza:  
To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates,  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

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#### Future Articles of Interest

- "Honoring the Unorthodox" ..... Ira D. Cardiff  
"Sense and Nonsense About Prayer" ..... John Morris  
"Principles or Reprisals" ..... Edward H. Redman

# Faith and Protest

ELLSWORTH M. SMITH

**M**Y wife, who ought to know better, has been after me to make some New Year's resolutions. A pious resolution is the kiss of death. The way to make a change is to start doing it—you can feel good about it later. But I want to use these pages at the beginning of this new year to state a few items of my personal faith in Unitarianism and to justify the process of protest.

Seven long years of study in Baptist institutions and then I learned in a Unitarian history what was the root doctrine of all the Baptists—the competency of the individual soul before God. A faith in man and a protest against an institutional interposition between man and his destiny! Those were the good old Anabaptist days, when the Unitarians were afraid of associating with them—too radical!

I believe in organization but its purpose in liberal religion is to give effective expression to the insights and ideas of people. It should never be an institution. Institutions become pompous, and those who are the high priests become obviously irreplaceable. Frequently we must come back to the essential—a single human be-

ing more than a little frightened by the vastness and coldness of the universe, trying to relate for warmth and significance to his fellow human beings. If he is fortunate he receives a little love and thus learns to love. If he is very fortunate he learns that it is more important to love than to be loved, just as it is more necessary to give than to receive.

The gist of a movement in religious liberalism like ours is in the gathering together of people who like-mindedly engage in a free search for meanings, for truth, beauty, and goodness, and for the ideal society. Such people are unimpressed by the authorities or by the authority of tradition because they are constantly exploring, never willing to “finalize” any single item of their faith. Always curious, always questing, they want to learn something and to think a little further every time they come together in formal meeting or engage together in informal conversation. Everything is grist for their character processes.

We believe in the human enterprise, and because we do, we are—all of us—operational humanists. But this does not prevent many of us from creating myths



and erecting towers of speculation and in this exercise we cannot go far wrong so long as we build on the solid foundation of responsible, humanitarian Humanism. The man who loses himself in the thought of God is a lost soul, indeed. There is more nourishment, there are more direction-pointers, in a single human encounter than in all the projections of the God-myth. Yet there is no necessary conflict. What does the Judeo-Christian God-myth counsel but to "do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God"? A very behavioral God indeed!

My central theme here is the responsibility of man for the best use of the only things he has any influence over—his thought and his action. And this is the responsibility the religious liberal insists on accounting for on his own initiative, by himself, without the fear of punishment or the hope of reward; and he would be ashamed of the theological *quid pro quo* the orthodox half believe in.

I believe in freedom exercised responsibly. I cannot help believing, however intuitively, that in the area of man vis-a-vis his dearest meanings, there must be an absolute freedom. And I would invest our movement in religious liberalism with my dearest meanings. To rest comfortably on an

external authority is not quite real. It certainly blocks growth and inquiry. It definitely yields the bitter fruit of pomposity and intolerance. Since change is a constant, authority is contrary to nature. A visitor once asked Roger Greeley, now our minister in Kalamazoo, when he lived in Battle Creek: "And what are your great traditions?" Roger was thrown for a loss for a moment and then came up with a typical Rogerian answer: "We make more breakfast cereal than any other city in the world." You ask a foolish question and you get a foolish answer!

Traditions can be lovely, can feed the emotions, can rest the fainting heart. But more civilizations have gone to oblivion through following tradition than from any other cause. What humanity is yet looking for is a civilization united dynamically by the habit of vigorous questioning and the continuous expansion of values. Such a civilization can meet any future unafraid. When life rocks a man back onto his heels, the all-important thing is for him to get back on his toes as fast as possible. The only real and the only emotional security that endures is the constant welcoming of new ideas, new facts, new insights, and new meanings.

There is nothing I enjoy more than to study the origins of the

world's great religions. But I can accept none of them fully, because none of them has produced a fully competent culture. We are still searching, improvising, testing, and this is our only safety and our greatest significance.

We support our movement in religious liberalism very poorly. I urge that we give it large and adequate support. Is this a contradiction? No, not as long as our movement preserves for all its units and for all its people the right to absolute freedom to be creative and responsible for achieving what they consider to be their dearest meanings. A person can scarcely go it alone in this endeavor. A very good friend, after years of attending my Cincinnati church, finally became a member because, he said, "here I think we can create a little of the ideal Society." It was an acknowledgment that we do these things together. In order that there may be enough of "together" to enable us fully to fulfill our natures, we must be a movement and enable the movement to function healthily. We need it in order that we may have a milieu in which we can operate significantly. It was a self-defeating impulse that prompted another layman to say: "I want to be a Unitarian by myself."

Now, if you support a movement you support an organization

and it follows, as night the day, that you will find yourself supporting some things you will think to be foolish and futile. But that is a small price to pay for achieving a functioning culture in which you can come closer to realizing in action your dearest meanings. There really is not any other way, is there?

So, I believe in humanity, I believe in human responsibility and freedom, and I believe in human interrelatedness. To the scientist, I am chiefly important not as an individual but as one who presents to his world offspring equipped to contribute worthily to the well-being of the species. I accept this ego-deflating role as a high commission. It is enough to make me qualitatively judgmental of my every thought, motive, and action. We are bound together by the necessities of today and the challenge of tomorrow. Let us do the job well!

I think of our Fellowships. I believe in them. If I believe that the individual human is competent before his destiny or his God, I have, you see, committed myself to a layman's kind of religion. As long as ministers are teachers, leaders of the free, and not keepers of the Keys, we have much use for them. But each lay person lives by the things he most profoundly believes and a layman's insights are not by defini-



tion less likely to be useful than are a minister's. And they are his own.

A group of lay men and women in a Chicago area church are calling together those who see value in talking in depth together about the things they most sincerely believe. This is a proper exercise of religion. The minister is, of course, welcome, provided he comes as a practitioner rather than as a priestly expert. Such things are happening in many of our churches—Fellowships within churches. This is the vitality of the fellowship movement.

When a Fellowship loses momentum and either ceases to grow or slips into decline, it is usually because the members are programming so formally that while they learn a little about a lot of things they do not strongly wrestle with their own meanings. Visitors get no idea that the Fellowship is more than a lecture platform. The real Fellowship is a most primary sort of human association. It is men, women, and destiny in an atmosphere of complete freedom, the freedom to be honest and to be creative.

As a movement, we are not doing right by our Fellowships. We help them get started, we give them some beginning suggestions and then we leave them pretty much alone. They can and do die of sheer loneliness. They

can and do die of unrelatedness. Many of them, small in size, give less to the denomination than it costs for a denominational staff person to visit them. This dare not be a factor. Beginning late in January and within a two-month period, John MacPhee and Gene Sparrow and I will visit with forty-five Fellowships—some new, some trying to get started, some with problems, some we just have not seen for a long time. We hope we will be welcome and will be useful to them. Certainly we will combine and study our experiences so that we will become more useful.

The ultimately exciting thing about Fellowships is that if they are a legitimate and viable means of religious organization, then the future for religious liberalism is unlimited indeed. Some of us are beginning to wonder if we cannot develop a sizable college campus program on the Fellowship method—it has already succeeded in a few instances.

My faith in Fellowships is, you see, a direct outgrowth of my other faiths. Yet, perhaps, they could only succeed in a religious liberalism that scorns superstition and honors honest thinking and sharing.

We are going through a Year of Confusion. Merger is largely to blame. I cannot complain in these particular columns because

our Editor, Randall Hilton, warned me this would happen if we voted merger. Well, we voted merger; I am glad it is taking place; and I can stand the mechanical confusions. What really bugs me is the shift that is taking place in our organizational philosophy under cover of merger.

We Unitarians and Universalists are very emotional people, sometimes at the wrong times. We had frustrated ourselves for so many years by failing to merge that when we came together at Syracuse we were in a celebrating, not a cerebrating, mood. The delegates, you and I included, did not read the proposals very carefully, we did not honor the proposed amendments that were submitted by local groups that did study the proposals—we simply voted the whole package deal in a couple of days and have gotten for ourselves what is on paper, at least, a pretty monolithic organization. Of course, a monolithic Unitarian-Universalist organization is a contradiction in terms and will not operate that way. But we will have to learn again, for the umpteenth time in our history, that centralism is not natural to us and that growth can only be advanced or recovered by the freest decentralization.

What we of the Western Conference are committed to is stated very well in a resolution voted

unanimously by our Board of Directors:

The responsibility of each organization of religious liberals to create a dynamic, insightful program for itself;

The right of such an organization to be encouraged to gather support, manpower and money, to further its programs, and to be provided a fluid situation in which it can develop according to its own best light,

And the obligation to secure experts and specialists, volunteer or employed, to assist in achieving its purposes.

These things we will do with all our energies and, I hope, clear-headedly. In doing these things we will be making our greatest possible contribution to the movement of religious liberalism.

We have come quite a "fur piece" in the last few years, as have the other regional organizations. We will be thrilled by the new Constitution being proposed to us by our Committee on Midwest Consolidation because it points strongly in new and more democratic directions. There are many obvious but nevertheless expansive things we should initiate, which we cannot at present consider for lack of funds. But we will counsel together in depth about our dearest meanings and if these things ring true I am sure



we will channel our giving in their direction. I have no fear.

My strategy of protest against an old-fashioned return to centrality will be to give my strength to every effort we can mobilize to create, to initiate, to under-

gird our best insights for the sake of the whole cause of religious liberalism and the joy of life it can mean to increasing thousands of men and women and children. There is my New Year's Resolution!



### Evening Sunrise

Our morning clouds are sunsets farther east;

And when you see, as I have seen, at dawn,

A depth and full maturity of hue,

As of late autumn leaves of hill-top oaks,

Remember then, as I remember now,

There is no dawn since the first dawn on earth:

Our dawns here are sunsets farther east!

Our evening clouds are dawns farther west;

And when you see, as I have seen, at dusk,

A vivid sweep and youthfulness of hue,

As of an apple orchard in first bloom,

Remember then, as I remember now,

There is no sunset here or anywhere:

Our sunsets here are dawns farther west!

Wallace Rusterholtz

# BOOKMAN'S NOTEBOOK

CHARLES W. PHILLIPS

## SOMETHING BADLY NEEDED

The something badly needed is something more than a pamphlet, something less than Earl Morse Wilbur's volumes on Unitarianism. The something should be informative at some length, but popular; readable but at a level beyond either superficiality or shortness that is almost cryptic. We should have produced it ourselves, but never mind we now have it—in the Thomas Nelson *Why I Am* series. We have *Why I Am a Unitarian* now by Jack Mendelsohn of our Arlington Street Church, Boston.

There is a bit on Unitarian history. Likewise, Universalism comes in for a historical survey in one chapter, as well it should. Questions of belief on various of the theological categories—which nearly all newcomers want to know about—come in for treatment, and the question of what *do* Unitarians believe is faced squarely and in a better than usual manner. This book you can use, can recommend; and this reviewer, for one, will use it in a Junior High Seminar in Church School. This latter is not at all to suggest that this is a juvenile book. It is rather to say that it has an uncommonly broad base.

I like very much the approach to what Unitarians believe. Mendelsohn puts this primarily in answer to a question of what the

Unitarian *Church* believes; what its *credo* is. The answer is simply: "We have no creed. That is all there is to it. We have no creed!" On Jesus, God, Bible, Immortality, and the other categories upon which religious organizations have formal statements of belief, the Unitarian *Church* says nothing. Of course there is nothing new in this. But how often we have gummed up the situation, by not stopping with the "that is all there is to it." Rather we have gone on to amplify a kind of negative theology on all the subjects at hand, saying "Unitarians do not believe this, that, or the other thing." I am sure none of us means to but we imply some kind of a content from which the negative thrust is made, and yet somehow fail to make clear what the content is. I have observed more than one outsider get the impression that we must exist to criticize only, but not to construct. Only *individuals* do the constructing. The Unitarian Church contributes to it, and contributes mightily, vitally, uniquely, by giving them the *freedom* to, the *favorable atmosphere* for, and the *acceptance as people* during, the process. Therefore the Unitarian Church has no creed, and it is the most positive thing that can be said about us. Mendelsohn does stress the fact that although the Church has no creed, individuals



may, do, and in fact are encouraged to, have beliefs *of their own*, and to keep them developing in adequacy.

Mendelsohn discusses matters of individual beliefs in several different ways. The first is personal. There is a lot of personal anecdote or reference in this, as there has to be from an individual explaining us. There is, of course, nothing in our tradition of the "testimonial witness" in the form of a Salvation Army meeting or of some revival groups. Yet since individual freedom of belief is one of our cardinal principles which the form of our organization is designed to attain, any individual in explaining us has to be personal. Here again is something many of us have paid lip service to, and have been careful to preface remarks with "an individual Unitarian can only speak for himself." Too few give much content, then, to what it is that they believe. One should be able to do two things here: (1) To give a personal answer on God, the Bible, or whatever, that shows thought about the subject, depth, responsibility, and all of the things whereby it is indicated that one has in fact engaged the subject. As Emerson implied in the Divinity School Address, let one's speech about love indicate that one has loved, or talk of sorrow show that one has suffered, etc. (2) In representing one's Church at least, not to evangelize simply with one's own point of view, but rather indicate that one is securely aware that others see the matter differently in some or many respects, and be able to suggest to a concerned inquirer that

with So and So, a Unitarian, whom one knows to think differently, it might also be worth discussing the matter.

Mendelsohn does both of these things quite well. The personal illustrations are apt and meaningful. He is charitable in his judgments of what he is reacting against. There is humor in much of it, and never any pomposity of taking himself or the cause *too* seriously. He is honestly himself, which is the basic thing a Unitarian is claiming the right to be. At the same time he recognizes frankly some trends of Unitarian differences, as, e.g., the Humanist-Theist controversy. He seeks in stating his own position to develop an encompassing one that will include the essential virtues of both, which is the irenic thing to do. Undoubtedly he is aware that some in both camps would not feel it is quite right for them, yet neither could feel themselves unfairly represented and, least of all, unaccepted. The total stranger to Unitarianism who reads this book must come away with a positive impression of strength in the organization that has this much honesty and vitality.

Another valuable aspect of this book is a rather clear and non-destructive way of indicating that the making of any belief on any subject is a rather complicated process. None of the creeds have sprung full-blown from the head of Zeus or Christ. They were formed slowly, they were man-made. In fact the very "humanness" of them, when one gets the feel of it, gives a new kind of attractiveness to some of them, which otherwise they had long

since lost. The only trouble with them is fixating on them, using them to stop the process of continual creed-making, at the level of personal belief, that is. It is not too difficult to argue, if one can avail himself of the leisurely pace of a book which is not too long, that surely new knowledge has to be absorbed. New experiences have to be encompassed; new insights must be expressed. Surely revelation is not sealed, or should not be. When one can illustrate, as one well can—and it is done felicitously here with various philosophers and men of stature—that there are different points of view to be legitimately taken, different perspectives to be expressed, then one is opening up the problems to the never-ending task and wonder of the big matters of life.

All in all, this book can be well used in orientation classes for new Unitarians; in groups of prospective ones; and it will not come amiss in study for some who have been around a while. Actually, we have a massive job on our hands, to which too little attention has been given. It is said that thirty-five percent of all living Unitarians are new to the movement in the last five years. If we continue to grow as we have, and we must hope and strive to make this so, then soon the figure will read: fifty percent of all living Unitarians will be new in the last seven years, or sixty percent in the last ten. At the least, the trend will go in that direction. What this says, to me at least, is that the strength of the tradition will be stretched as far as the elastic will allow, and could be stretched to the breaking point of the stability of the tradi-

tion, *unless* all of the newcomers get hold of it quickly and clearly before they come in, (so that they are coming in authentically in its terms) or shortly after. I can see no way whatsoever to solve that problem except through some adult education pitched to the nature of Unitarianism in rather direct terms. We have a horrible dearth of materials with which to do this. Here is one of the first, practicable, usable things to work with.

One hesitates to mention any shortcomings in a book of this sort, when it has so many plus virtues, and when some of the shortcomings are due to the fact that it is *one* book. Some additional things I would like to see, would take other books. Nevertheless, I mention a few things to be expanded by the author or someone else, more in the vein to suggest that there is still some more material to be produced to meet the problem just mentioned above, of keeping a growing movement from becoming too diffuse on the edges.

One such would be a short, popular but accurate setting of the movement into the Western Judeo-Christian stream. This means a springboard summary of the history of Western religious thought, with special focus upon when, wherein, and how we branched off. One brief, even if a good, chapter on our history cannot quite do this. I would find such very useful.

Another comment I would make is not so much on the chapter on our attitude toward Religious Education, as it is a note to the Division of Education to wake



up and thoroughly reevaluate their materials in this area. Mendelsohn states our *theory* about what we want to do quite well. I would not expect him in a book like this to essay a criticism of the materials we use, but for myself, anyway, I find too much gap between intention and performance. Mendelsohn states very well what we would hope we were doing with the Bible, for example. However, the Biblical materials we have, and books upon the same (and they are supposed to add up to some forty percent of the materials) are in toto little short of being bad. They are poor in literary quality (some of the storifying that goes on is little, if any, better than the continuity for a David C. Cook Bible comic strip). Some of the apparatus of scholarship which is touted is so out of date as to be painful, and the whole is dispersed in the curriculum in undigested blocks and lumps. Such a theme merits a whole critical essay all by itself, and maybe this column soon will essay a series of reviews based exclusively on our R. E. books. It is only mentioned because here in a book about us, we have a theory stated; and sooner or later someone is going to take this seriously and then be let down when he finds out what is really the score.

Some other comments I would make lie mostly in the realm of personal semantic sensitivities. When Mendelsohn says that "Unitarianism is an ethical rather than a doctrinal religion" I know what he means and I agree with him. Left alone, I would say it differently or find need to with some very good people who are "Uni-

tarians without knowing it." For example, "doctrine" is just as inescapable in "ethics" as it is in "theology." I find nothing wrong with "doctrine," so long as it does not ossify and become static in "dogma." Any one of my "beliefs" is a "doctrine" while I hold it. The whole point here is that, without ever breaching the principle that organizationally we have and will have no creeds, we encourage individual "credos," growing, maturing, becoming more adequate, more relevant, more absorbing of new truth, new knowledge, new insight, etc. Meanwhile, at any given moment, we would not be afraid of words like "belief," or "doctrine." The words "ethical" and "religion" are linked, and properly so, but I would like to see more emphasis made on the linkage and some wariness presented against those who would reduce religion to "ethics." Of course we are radically committed to the principle of "by their fruits shall ye know them." Tithing mint, anise, and cumin, while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, is not for us. Which says, however, that for us "religion" without a high, obvious ethical result is barren. We should not forget, however, or neglect sharp emphasis upon where it is sometimes needed, that ethics without religion loses vitality, begins to drift down towards morals, then to mores, finally to customs of the social class or group one is in. It takes the invocation of an ultimate point of reference in the religious sphere to sustain real drive and genuine devotion sometimes required through long periods of suppression. The reformer

and the rebel *against* the customs and mores of the society in which they live must sustain, or give courage to, the martyr. Nobody is getting burned at the stake these days, of course, but we have actually more exquisite psychological tortures to be withstood.

Which means, too, that I would hesitate to speak in such a way of "theology" as to demean it, or to make it subordinate, possibly, to psychology. "Theology," or "philosophy of religion" is a noble and necessary discipline. Neither Humanist nor anyone else escapes it, if he thinks consistently, rigorously, and thoroughly about his assumptions and presuppositions. No positive predicate from "freedom" to "love," or from "justice" to "goodness" can stay out of the realm. We may have to be in-

genious, creative, inventive with idiom beyond the old time-worn and, it may be, abused beyond retrieving words of traditional theology. But we escape no problem. Possibly to some of us, the word "theology" has become abused beyond use. If so, let us make it clear that this is what is the matter, and that no one is let off the hook of the real problems with which "theology" dealt—problems of unity, authority, and value in the widest dimensions. None of it is an easy matter. Unitarianism is no reductionism.

Let more essays come from Mendelsohn and others, and let Unitarian publishing get at a short shelf of basic, clarifying reference books to go with this first one.



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